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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 000281

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PK](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: DELHI WELCOMES PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO DOSSIER

REF: ISLAMABAD 00313

Classified By: PolCouns Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: The Indian Government reacted positively to the much awaited official response from Pakistan to the dossier on the Mumbai terror attacks. Foreign Minister Mukherjee's recognition of the Pakistani response as a "positive development" was echoed by the Indian media and Post contacts. Mukherjee emphasized to Parliament that India will continue to seek to bring perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks to justice and to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure which exists in Pakistan. While the Pakistani response may temporarily quiet some of the harsher rhetoric, history and India's upcoming elections suggest the GOI will maintain a tough public posture. End Summary.

Indian Officials: "Positive Development"

12. (C) Much to the delight and surprise of mainstream India, Islamabad's Interior Minister, Rehman Malik, on 12 February announced in a news conference that part of the conspiracy leading to QMumbai attacks had been planned in Pakistan (reftel). He said Islamabad would be requesting more information from Delhi, saying the two states have "a joint responsibility" to carry out the investigation. The same evening, Pakistan's official response was provided to the Indian High Commissioner in Islamabad, including a list of 30 questions and a request for any other incriminating evidence which could be helpful for the prosecution of those accused in Pakistan.

13. (C) The initial reaction of Indian officials has been generally constructive, with Home Affairs Minister P. Chidambaram, in a brief statement to the press several hours after Malik's press conference, calling Pakistan's formal response to the Indian dossier a "positive development." In a February 13 suo moto statement before Parliament, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee also used the words "positive development" to describe Pakistan's actions, and added that India would review the response and provide further information as warranted. M.E.A. Joint Secretary (Americas) Gaitri Kumar told PolCouns she believed Pakistan's response was "historic" and she thanked the U.S. for its role in bringing it about.

Still Some Criticism

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¶4. (C) While Mukherjee's statement acknowledged the positive nature of the Pakistani response, he made it clear that India is not yet completely satisfied with Pakistan's overall actions since November 26. He faulted Pakistan for responding to the dossier only after India petitioned it for the fourth time since 5 January and listed in detail the instances when India petitioned Pakistan to act on the dossier. He criticized Islamabad for initially adopting a "diversionary" and "not appropriate" approach and exhibiting a "misplaced sense of victimhood" following the November attacks in Mumbai. Mukherjee said his government would examine the issues raised in Pakistan's response and that the result of India's investigation can be provided to Pakistan, but he reiterated that the onus is still on Pakistan to identify the guilty and bring them to justice. Despite Mukherjee's relatively stronger language, he ended the speech on a more conciliatory tone, saying India has no quarrel with the people of Pakistan and that people-to-people contact should continue.

Public Reaction: "A Big Step in the Right Direction"  
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¶5. (C) Post's contacts and the Indian media have taken Interior Minister Malik's news conference on 12 February quite positively, with NDTV calling Malik's comments "a set of stunning statements coming from the Pakistani government" which "represents a fundamental change in Pakistan policy"

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and puts the ball back in India's court. Observer Research Foundation's Pakistan specialist, Wilson John, said these are "welcome remarks" and "a positive thing that happened for the first time" since the Mumbai terror attacks. John cautioned, however, that this was not the end of a bitter period between India and Pakistan.

¶6. (C) Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses Senior Fellow Dr. Ashok Behuria referred to Malik's remarks as "very encouraging," saying they were timely and in the right direction. Extending credit to the United States for Pakistan's progress, Behuria stated Malik's remarks were "a direct outcome of U.S. influence in the region and constant pressure over Islamabad to come out of denial mode." Acknowledging that it may take more time for the mist to clear, Behuria praised Pakistan's actions: "a good beginning is to candidly admit one's fault."

Comment: Government Likely to Soften Tone, to the Extent Possible in Election Season  
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¶7. (C) Comment: Most importantly, Indian officials and the Indian public have recognized the positive nature of the Pakistani response. It is unclear whether this initially positive reaction will lead to India agreeing to a joint investigation, with some media commentators noting that it may be difficult with Indian elections around the corner, but expect at a minimum greater cooperation in the overall investigation. The Pakistani admission that the attack was at least partially planned on its soil, together with its demonstration that it has already taken action to pursue those responsible, should help Prime Minister Singh's government in toning down the high pitch of rhetoric against Pakistan. To a lesser extent, however, the deep-seated skepticism of Pakistan's intentions lingers, and Post expects the Indian government will publicly continue to press for more action and more evidence of Pakistan's sincerity. Particularly during this last session of the Indian Parliament before the general election in April/May, Indian politicians will likely feel the need to talk tough on terrorism and Pakistan, even if they believe the GOP is sincerely moving forward on its investigation. Indeed, a key UPA strategy has been to "neutralize terrorism" as a campaign

issue. Despite the political theatrics, the consensus in Delhi seems to be that, perhaps surprisingly, the Pakistani government has taken the right first steps in its response to the Indian dossier on the Mumbai attacks. End Comment.

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